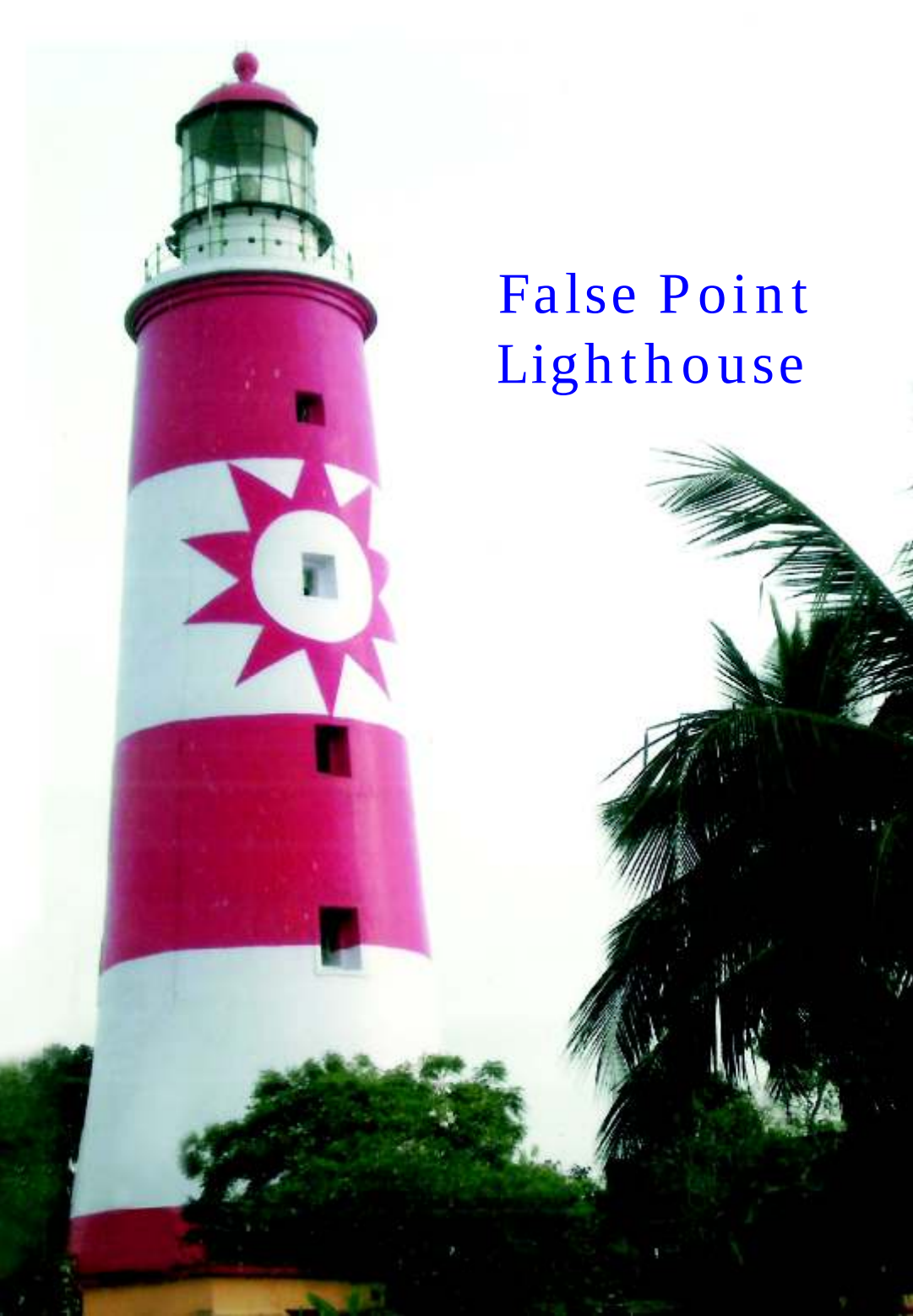
False Point
Lighthouse

Historical Lighthouses

False Point
LIGHTHOUSE

Researched & Compiled By
ICR Prasad

Publication of
Directorate General
Lighthouses and lightships
Deep Bhavan, A13, Sector-24
Noida - 201 301

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भारत सरकार
नई दिल्ली-110 001
MINISTER OF SHIPPING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
NEW DELHI-110 001

MESSAGE

26th July, 2012

It is heartening to note that DGLL has been taking up the publications of history of lighthouses in the right earnest, resulting in publication of number of books on Lighthouses. The present booklet on the history of 175 year old "False Point" Lighthouse is a laudable effort by the author in enlightening the public regarding the heritage Lighthouse.

I congratulate Director General of Lighthouses & Lightships and their officers in bringing out the booklet and hope that the effort will be widely appreciated.

T.K.V.

(G.K. VASAN)

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26th July, 2012

MESSAGE

The rich inventory of the Directorate General of Lighthouses & Lightships is little known to the outside world. The effort of the Directorate in acquainting the general public about the old lighthouses, which have remained sentinels on our coast guiding traffic for centuries, is worth appreciating. The booklet on "False Point" Lighthouse has been well conceived and meticulously brought out. I appreciate the pain taken by the author in researching the archives of various regions in consolidating the information.

The release of the booklet on "False Point" Lighthouse will help the general public to fathom the efforts made by authorities, centuries back, to secure trade and commerce by development of infrastructure.

I also hope that the various booklets on lighthouses, which the Directorate is working on, will help all of us in understanding the past glory of important lighthouses and their role in ensuring safe navigation in the area.

I wish them all the best.

(P.K. Sinha)

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कैप्टन ए एम सूरज
महानिदेशक
Capt. A M SUREJ
Director General

27th July, 2012

Forward

The history of lighthouses is as old as navigation. In pursuit of preserving this rich heritage, lighthouse authorities' world over have tried to pen the history of lighthouses. In India, too, we made an effort in 2004 and published a book "Lighthouse of India" which was released during 34th IALA Council Meeting held in New Delhi in December 2004. Nonetheless, there are centennial lighthouses on our Coastline that have immensely contributed in the navigation particularly when there was no other means of assistance available in the inventory of the Directorate. The detailed history of these lighthouses needs to be recorded and brought in public domain.

The booklet on "False Point" Lighthouse is in your hand. The information has been meticulously presented. This has been possible only due to sincere efforts put in the research by Shri ICR Prasad, Assistant Engineer (Electronics). I congratulate Shri ICR Prasad and other officers who have been associated in this work. I hope that the information will not only be of historical value but might assist our engineers in future risk assessment & future planning

I foresee a series of similar publication on other centennial lighthouses.

(CAPT A M SUREJ)

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27th July, 2012

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the sincere and painstaking efforts of Shri ICR Prasad, Assistant Engineer (Electronics) in undertaking the research and study for compilation of the relevant data for bringing out this booklet. Being the first time, there is always a room for improvement which I am sure will be manifested in the next edition. I urge the knowledgeable readers to bring to notice of authority, any omission/addition which are required to be taken note of so that the same could be incorporated in the next edition.

This book on False Point Lighthouse shall be of immense value for the Lighthouse enthusiasts and is dedicated to all the Lighthouse personnel world over in pursuit of the highest goal of service to mariners.

(P.P. Sinha)
Deputy Director General

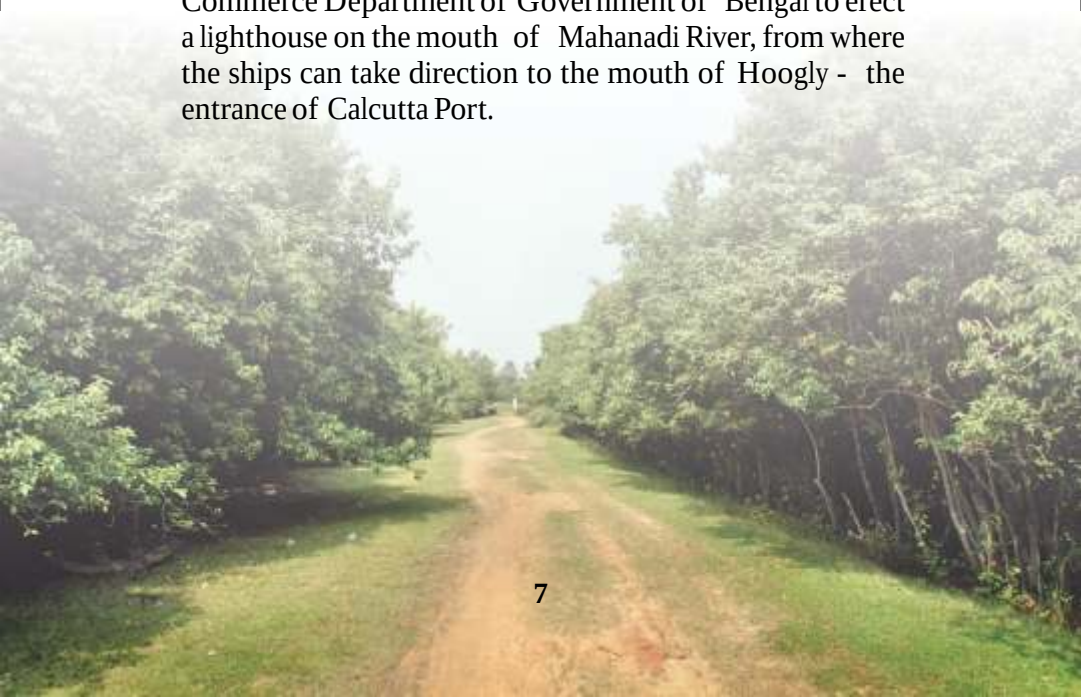
False Point Lighthouse

The first landfall lighthouse on the Bay of Bengal coast, a mammoth structure made with red granite blocks and a huge embossed star on its body facing the sea, a lighthouse with the largest establishment in the world - I heard a lot about this station, but what attracted me the most is that it is the oldest working lighthouse in India.

Orissa, blessed by the nature for its abundant natural resources, was the last state to be taken over by the British on the Bay of Bengal Coast. They took over Coastal Orissa in 1803 from the then ruler Vidyadhar Sendh.

Proposal for Light

False Point Lighthouse was constructed as a landfall light for Calcutta Port. Ever moving sand heads of Bay of Bengal caused hurdles to ships proceeding to Calcutta (now Kolkata) port, and after loosing several of their ships in these sand heads, British India Government asked the Marine Wing under the Agricultural, Revenue and Commerce Department of Government of Bengal to erect a lighthouse on the mouth of Mahanadi River, from where the ships can take direction to the mouth of Hoogly - the entrance of Calcutta Port.



Canal Leading to False Point

The site selected for erection of the Lighthouse was then called as Hookeytolla, believed to be named after a British. Several ships proceeding to Calcutta port, mistook Hookeytolla for Palmirah Port, lying 1^0 farther north in the mouth of Hoogly River, and made the authorities decide that the befitting name for this place and Lighthouse could be 'False point' and not Hookeytolla.

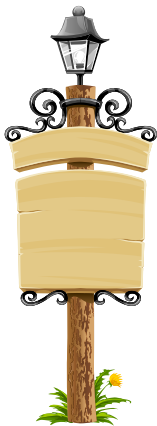
It took several years to plan the Lighthouse and get funds allotted. In the year 1835, the False Point harbour and part of the adjacent coast was surveyed by Commander Richard Lloyd, Officiating Surveyor General of India. Finally in 1836, second Lieutenant H. Righy, who was working in Public Works Department as an Executive Engineer was appointed as the in-charge of construction.

Lieutenant Henry Righy

Henry Righy, son of Joseph, a Solicitor, and Elizabeth, was born on 10th May 1811 at Great Marlow, Buckingham, England and was baptized on 13th June 1815 at Barking, Essex. He started his career with the Royal Engineers and later joined the Bengal Engineer Group, commonly known as Bengal Sappers or Bengal Engineers, under British India Government. When he decided to leave the Army and utilise his Engineering skills for public welfare, he joined the Public works Department under the Princely State of Bengal as an Executive Engineer.

Construction Starts

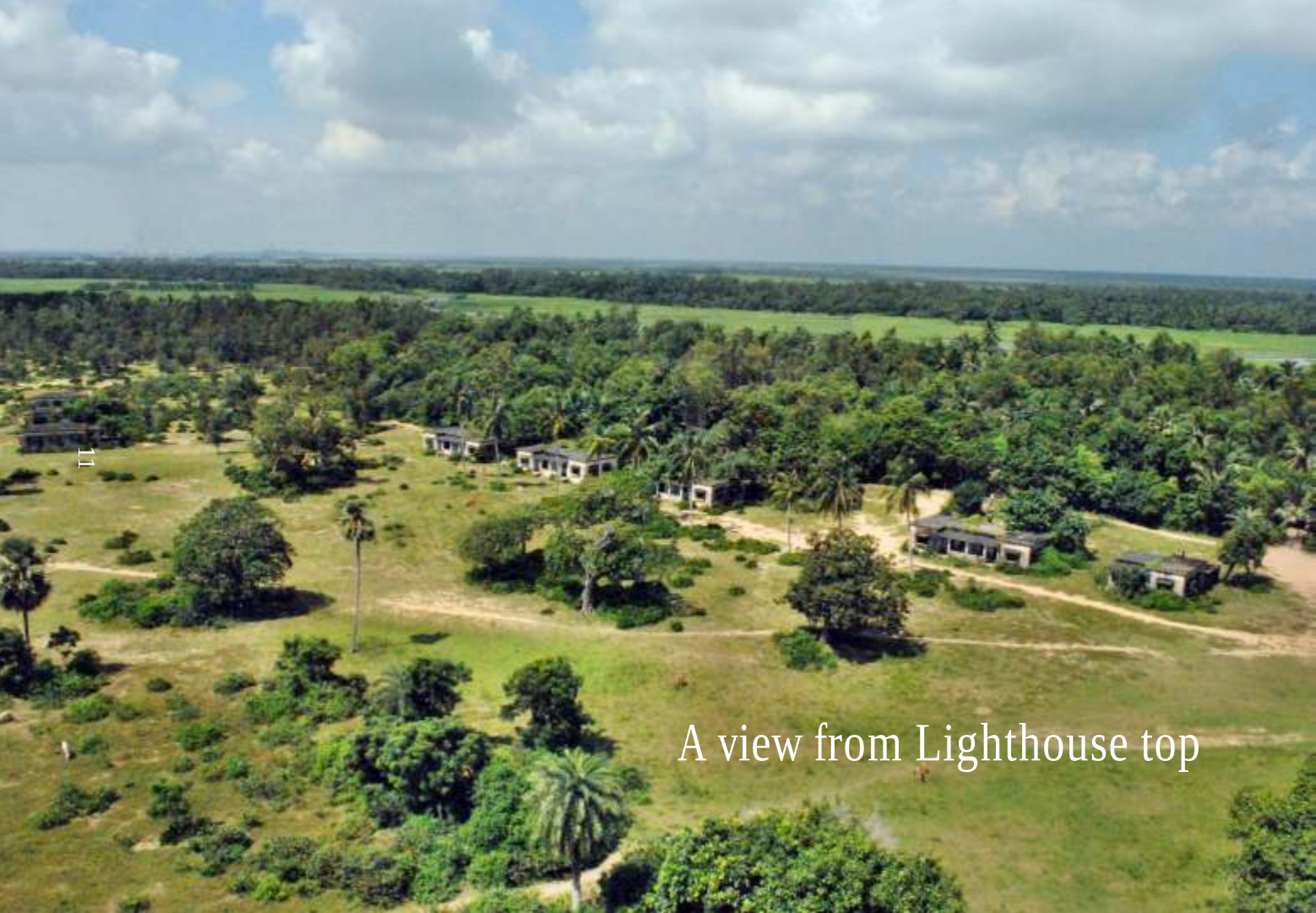
Being situated in a remote place, without any road or rail connectivity, the main obstacle faced by Lt. Righy was transportation of building materials to the site. The



available approaches to the site were, either through sea or through the Mahanadi River. Being a soldier by birth, the formidable conditions could not deter Righy from attaining his task, and he commenced the work of the tower on 6th December 1836. These adverse conditions forced Righy to revise his estimates for construction and according to the communication No. 481 dated 15th March 1837, from the Bengal state government to the Government of India, the revised estimates for construction as indicated in the records.

1. Expense for erecting the Lighthouse tower : Rs. 36528-
2. Expense for erecting out offices for the Lighthouse : Rs. 4807-
3. Expense for erecting Superintendent's quarters : Rs. 4131-

The tower and the other buildings were constructed with red granite stone, cut from the interior Orissa. The style of embedding granite slabs inside the wall to form the steps of the staircase has not been used at False Point. The staircase was wooden so was the beams supporting the roof blocks. The work of the 37 meter high tower and other buildings commenced on 6th December 1836 and was completed on 16th October 1837.



A view from Lighthouse top

Old Superintendent's Quarters

The Superintendents' quarters was a double storied building on the East side of the tower facing the sea. Another double storied building on the opposite side was with facilities to store general items and ration in the ground floor and accommodate the Assistant Superintendent on the first floor. A long barrack was there on the north side to accommodate native Lightkeepers and Lascars and the oil room was on the North-East corner and kitchen on the North-West corner. All these buildings were connected with high fortified walls like an enceinte to keep the wild animals and bandits away. The main entrance to this secluded area was on the south side and there was a semi covered well inside the courtyard for drinking water.

The lantern room of 12 ½ feet diameter was imported from England along with lighting apparatus and brass reflectors. The light was a fixed one and the illuminant was coconut oil wick lamp. The light was commissioned on 1st March 1938.

Since the light was insufficient to warn the marines sailing at a distance from shore, blue lights were shown and maroons were fired from the tower once in four hours.

Recommendation for improvement

Mr. A. Baker, the Officiating Master Attendant (Port Officer) of Calcutta Port had recommended the improvement of False Point Light in the year 1875. In his report of July 1875 to the Secretary to Government of Bengal, Revenue Department, he commented that, "The lamps and burners are old fashioned, with large concave reflectors, and it would be advisable to have them replaced by a first class light of the most approved description. The light was erected to afford a guide to vessels arriving from Europe, when making the land, to show them their position, and to enable them to take a correct departure for the Sand Heads and entrance to the Hoogly".

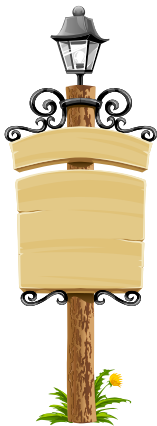
Based on the above recommendation, the Commissioner of Orissa, wrote to the Public Works Department of Government of Bengal, for necessary actions for the "thorough overhaul and efficient repair" of the Lighthouse.

Old Light keeper's Quarters

But the proposal materialised only in the year 1878 after the visit of the Lieutenant Governor to Orissa. On personal observation of light from the sea, the Lieutenant Governor was not impressed with the "feebleness and imperfection of the illuminating power" of the light and ordered immediate replacement of the present equipment with a first class light. Accordingly, the Under Secretary to Government of Bengal vide his letter dated 29th March 1878 requested the Calcutta Port Officer to submit a report and estimate for a new lantern and guidance for procurement of equipment and its cost, and the Under Secretary's personal opinion was "a lantern of the same kind as that used at Vengurla Reef would be suitable".

On receiving the Secretary's letter, Lieutenant F. Warren, officiating Port Officer of Calcutta, deputed a person to False Point Lighthouse to take the actual measurements of the tower and to prepare a detailed drawing of it. Mr. Warren recommended to go for a holophote first order light, of which, one was installed at Alleppey and was reported as giving great service. But he suggested taking the advice of Mr. Thomas Stevenson, a Civil Engineer of M/s Stevenson of Edinburgh, Scotland, who was an expert in Lighthouse engineering, before taking a final decision.

It is not clear from the records, whether Mr. Stevenson was consulted or not, but the final decision to go for a fixed light with first order optic was taken by Commander A. Duntas Taylor, then Superintendent of Marine Surveys on a request dated 3rd August 1878 from the Secretary to Government of Bengal, Department of



Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce and Mr. Taylor's paradigm was the equipment installed at Muttam Point Lighthouse near Cape Comerin, the preceding year. In an era, when the fixed lights were being converted to flashing lights, the decision to go for an outdated fixed light proved to be a wrong one, later.

The Superintendent of Marine survey, who recommended for a fixed light, was well aware of the advantages of a new generation flashing lights, but his justification for opting for a fixed light was, "Having regard to the range of visibility, a revolving light of first order must have always precedence to others, because its full beam can have from 8 to 13 times of strength of the fixed or occulting light. But I look forward to the day when the outer light at the Sand Heads may be of the first order, dioptric and revolving, on a structure of screw piles.

Therefore I recommend False Point should remain a fixed light: besides which the revolving arrangements involves more expenses in alteration and upkeep".

A screw pile lighthouse was designed and erected by Colonel Alex Fraser at Krishna Shoal, off the Burma Coast (that was a part of British India then) in 1869. This was boasted as an alternative for the Lightships placed in the mouth of Hoogly River and on Sand Heads of Bay of Bengal. This gave a ray of hope to the Calcutta Port authorities, which lost four of their lightships within a span of twelve years, to the cyclones in the Bay of Bengal. A Lightship was manned on an average by 36 people and this heavy loss of lives, drove the authorities to the alternative of Screw pile lighthouses, that they hoped, can be dismantled and re-erected at new locations, as and when the shoal moves in with change of currents. But, after 8 years' satisfactory service, the Krishna Shoal Lighthouse was swilled with its entire staff, without a trace, in a

Old lighthouse well

devastating cyclone of 1878 and nobody dared to suggest another screw pile Lighthouse in the Bay of Bengal and so the Sand Heads was never lighted.

Mr. Taylor advocated to place supply order for the Optic and Lantern room with M/s Chance Brothers of Birmingham, who were the only makers of Lighthouse optics in England then, and estimated the cost of First order optic and the light apparatus as £ 1516 and Lantern room as £ 2749 and for this, details were collected from the State of Madras, that erected the Muttam Point lighthouse in the previous year. Mr. Taylor had a plan for getting manufactured a First order optic that can fit inside the existing lantern room at False Point, and save the cost of Lantern room, but since the Lieutenant Governor was desirous of erecting the new light in that winter itself, and the manufacturers informed that the lantern room is an unavoidable part of light apparatus, he succumbed to pressure and recommended for the purchase of new Lantern room along with the new light apparatus.

The standard First order lantern room manufactured by M/s Chance Brothers required a platform of 22 feet diameter, whereas the diameter at summit of False Point Lighthouse tower was 19 feet only. So Public works department was asked to prepare

the tower to accommodate the new lantern room.

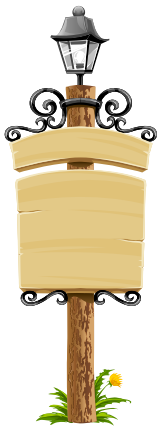
New equipment ordered

The details of equipment ordered for False Point Lighthouse were:

"First order fixed dioptric light to illuminate 200 degrees. Apparatus complete comprising five upper panels with prisms; five lower panels with prisms; dioptric mirrors of 160 degrees in 4 panels; slid Gunmetal frame work mounted on service table; column and balcony of cast iron; improved pressure lamp and stand with new 'Trinity system' burners (three spares); spare pistons and rods and piston leathers; damper tubes, capped ventilator tubes and accessories for service; various appurtenances, including chimneys, wicks and tools, with packing."

"Lantern complete; circular cast iron pedestal with sheet iron lining; door and inner service galleries, standard astragals of wrought iron with gunmetal facings, gunmetal cross bars; 3/8 inch polished plate glass with two spares of each size; iron sole plates, gunmetal sills and handles; copper gutter, horizontal ladder rods, brass rain pipes, cast iron rafters with connecting rings; double copper copula with external ladder; revolving copper cowl with vane; Holland blinds; copper wire rope for lightning conductor and C. Balustrade round lantern of cast iron plasters and wrought iron rails; iron ladder from base to lantern to outer service gallery, and two movable ladders, with suitable packing."

On approval of this suggestion for a First order fixed optic by the Bengal Government, formal supply order was placed from Simla office of the Viceroy on the 27th of



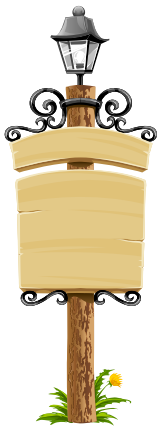
August 1878 through the Secretary of State for India, at London. Since Bengal Government was very particular on installing the new light apparatus in that year itself, as propounded by the Lieutenant Governor, telegraphic orders were placed for the supply, to avoid delay in communication.

Renovation work

The Collector of Cuttack District insisted on issuing a Notice to Mariners in the Calcutta Gazette regarding the discontinuation of services of False Point Lighthouse during the dismantling of old equipment, widening of tower summit and installation of new lantern room and light apparatus, and substituting a lightship during this break of service and this was communicated to the Chief Engineer of Public works department, by the Superintending Engineer of P.W.D. vide communication No. 3432, dated 29th November 1878.

Mr. Duntas Taylor, Superintendent of Marine Surveys had different ideas and turned down the proposal of substituting Lightship and made arrangements to show the light from the same tower during the alteration work. This curtailed unnecessary expenditure for the services of a Lightship.

The Public Works Department Engineers, who were entrusted with the work of increasing the diameter of tower at summit, to accommodate the new lantern room, added a two tier cornice that increased the size as well as beauty of the tower. The wooden beams supporting the roof slabs were attacked by white ants by then and Engineers replaced them with steel joists.



Tardy supply of Lantern room and Lighthouse apparatus from England affected the schedule proposed by the Government of Bengal for exhibition of improved light, and the installation of equipments could be commenced only in November 1879.

Training for Lightkeepers

The Director General of Stores, while supplying the new Lighthouse equipments, advised the Secretary to Government of India, Public Works Department to consider deputing the Superintendant of False Point Lighthouse to Prongs or Kanery Lighthouse under Bombay Government, where such new Lighthouse equipments were prevailing, to take training on proper method of trimming and clearing of new lantern.

Rising to the occasion, Government of Bengal immediately approved this suggestion and necessary orders were passed on 6th December 1879 for the deputation of Mr. Workman, Superintendent of False Point Lighthouse, to Bombay, for training at Prongs or Kanery Lighthouse and a stopgap arrangement was made at False Point Lighthouse by deputing a Lightship Officer in Workman's place.

Commissioning of Renovated Light

The 'Notice to Mariners' published in the Calcutta

Gazette of February 1880, referring to the earlier Notice to Mariners of 4th September 1879, describes the light as, "fixed white light, elevated 129 feet above the level of high water and should be visible in clear weather in every direction seaward from a distance of 19 miles." The notice also warned the mariners that the blue lights and rockets being shown from False Point Lighthouse will be discontinued on commissioning of new light.

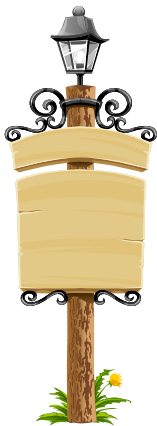
The new first order optic and light on the renovated tower was commissioned by then Lieutenant Governor of Bengal Sir Ashley Eden in the presence of Mr. John Macmillan, Executive Engineer of Mahanadi Irrigation division of Public Works Department on 1st February 1880 and total expenditure of renovation was Rs 45000.

The lantern room supplied by M/s Chance Brothers in 1878 is still in service at False Point Lighthouse, even though the light apparatus was once replaced, and modified on several occasions.

False Point Port

Rice used to be extensively cultivated in Orissa (renamed as Odisha recently) and there was surplus stock available for export. Eying this, the British decided to construct a Port at the mouth of River Mahanadi, and planned to construct canals to connect the Port with Cuttack and Calcutta to facilitate in-land navigation and improve irrigation facilities for better agricultural production.

1400 acres of land was leased out from the Maharajah of Bardwan to construct a Port at the place called



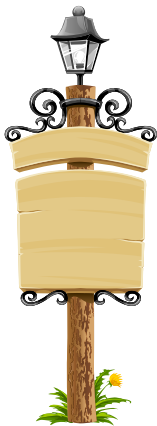
as Hookeytoolla . Two sandy Islands in the mouth of Mahanadi River, namely Plowden's Island and Dowdeswell's Island were acting as break waters and safe anchorage was available in the harbour behind them. As there was no populated towns in the vicinity of the port, imports at Hookeytolla were nil, the ships came to port on ballast to load rice mainly for export to Mauritius.

The Famine Commissioner, who had visited False Point in 1867, had commented on the harbour as "the best harbour in the coast of India between Hoogly and Bombay", but the Port never flourished. Since the income from the Port was hardly sufficient to pay the salary of the Port
officer and his staff, Government showed volte face for further developments and the Port was officially closed down in 1924. The devastating cyclone of 1925 destroyed the entire port buildings and removed the last traces of the existence of a port, silted the port area and washed away the sandy Islands that protected the Port as break waters. Later another Port was developed at Chandballi, at the mouth of river Biturnee.

Complaints about inefficiency of new light

The first complaint about inefficiency of the new light was reported in March 1880 by Captain Woolcott, Commander of the vessel 'Perkin' under the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company and he remarked that either the trimming of wick or the quality of oil must be defective.

Since the oil used for lighting was first quality coconut oil, the fingers were pointed towards the



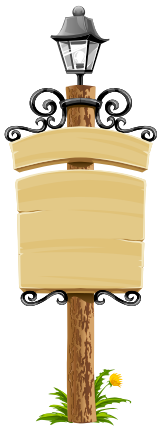
inefficiency of the Lightkeepers, who had no previous experience in the neoteric lamps. The lamp supplied by M/s Chance brothers had six wicks in its burner, of which, five wicks were lighted regularly and the sixth wick was reserved for hazy and foggy weather. To get best performance, the proper trimming of wicks in regular intervals and maintaining the right height of the wicks was a must. Proposals were made to get the services of an experienced Lightkeeper from Bombay, pointing out that the same problem faced by Karachi Lighthouse after installation of new apparatus, was solved by deputing keepers from Bombay for training the existing Keepers. This initial snag was later surmounted by getting copies of printed rules for Lightkeepers in Bombay Port trust, and strict implementation of the same in False Point also.

New Owners

Even though False Point Lighthouse was constructed as a landfall Lighthouse for Calcutta Port and the light keeping staff was paid from the muster of Calcutta Port, the general administration of the station was under the Marine department till 1881 and supervision of light was done by the Commissioner of Orissa through the Collector of Cuttack. On 1st November of that year the administrative control of the Lighthouse was also transferred to Calcutta Port.

Changing to Occulting light

Questionable performance of False Point light was again brought to the notice of Calcutta Port Commissioner in 1883 after stranding and subsequent loss of the British-India steamer 'Chinsurah', and predictably, Captain of vessel pointing towards the defective character of the light. The



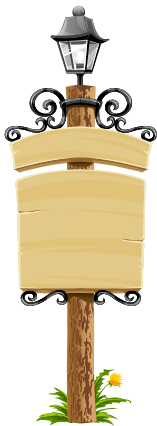
Captain even incriminated the Lightkeepers for keeping the light on reduced power in view of saving oil. Lightkeepers were exonerated after an enquiry conducted by Port commissioners, which revealed that the light at False Point was being maintained to the standards enforced by the authorities.

Brought to the notice of the Port Commissioners at this juncture was the fact, that, being a fixed one, False Point light can be construed to a mast light of another passing vessel by Ship Captains, and to resolve this problem, the light was converted as an occulting light from 1st September 1884. The occulting character was given by lowering and raising a metal tube on the burner at regular intervals to obscure the light from the burner, to make the light visible for 26 seconds and darken for 4 seconds in every 30 seconds. This new system was commissioned in the presence of Mr. H.J. Reynolds, Chairman to the Port commissioners, Mr. Duff Bruce, Vice Chairman and Engineer to the Port Commissioners and Mr. Eaton W. Petley, Deputy Conservator of the Port of Calcutta.

Even though a mechanised system was provided for automatic occultation of the light, due to the frequent failure of the system, Lightkeepers used to operate the clock manually during their night shifts.

Improvements to Light

In 1927, Mr. D. Alan Stevenson, the Scottish Lighthouse Engineer of Northern Lighthouse Board of Scotland was invited to India by the Inspector-General of Lighthouses, to submit his recommendations for the better



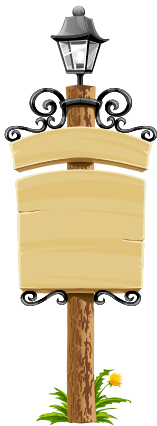
performance of Indian Lighthouses. In his report, Stevenson remarked that "If the shipping requires this light to be maintained, it should be increased in power." After taking over the light from the Orissa State Government, the Chief Inspector of Lighthouses also felt the inefficiency of the light and decided to improve the illuminant. In place of 6 wick Capillary lamp, 85mm Petroleum Vapour lamp supplied by M/s Chance Brothers of Birmingham was introduced and revolving screens took the place of occulting tube. This new light was commissioned in March 1931.

Accidents and deaths

Accidents and deaths were a part of life at False Point; the cemetery attached to lighthouse validates the above statement and a native Doctor posted at the station was insufficient in countering calamities. While native workers were killed due to malnutrition and associated diseases, most of the European Keepers and their family members were killed either in accidents or malarial attack. Death started its odyssey at False Point Lighthouse by grabbing its Superintendent Captain Robert Smith who died at the age of 51 on the 12th December 1842

Dearth of sanitation and opulent breeding grounds for mosquitoes in the surrounding area caused the spreading of epidemics like malaria and the staff who were deprived of saturated food due to remoteness of the station and facing malnutrition problems, had worst body immunity, and were always prone to the attack of diseases that caused mortality.

There were some Lightkeepers who fought against all these adversities and acclimatised with the ambient

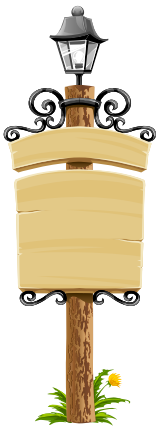


conditions and served for long durations at False Point. Mr. W.B. Sparkes, the Head Lightkeeper who retired on 5th October 1913 had served at False Point Lighthouse for 22 years and 8 months and his Assistant Keeper Mr. Naylor served for 19 ½ years. Both of these Lightkeepers were compulsorily retired as a consequence of transferring the Lighthouse administration to Bihar and Orissa State Government. Mr. Sparkes might have assimilated the inevitability of sanitation after loosing his 11 month old son Edward Sparkes on 1st October 1892.

During the service at False Point, Mr. Sparkes and his assistant were very particular about the upkeep of the surroundings of the station. They cleared the complete ground around the station, filled ditches to stop breeding of mosquitoes and maintained a garden that supplied them fresh vegetables and fruits round the year. The healthy atmosphere, saturated food and the extra exercise they had in the form of gardening, kept them healthy and the inspecting officers always appreciated their attitude.

Fatal accidents

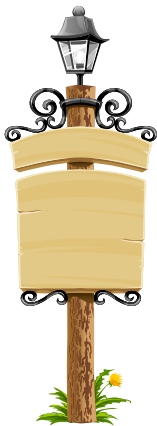
All fatal accidents at False Point were connected with boats. Captain W. Barkley, Superintendent who lost his wife to an epidemic attack in 1852 at False Point, had suffered a fractured jaw in an accident at False Point and was taken to Puri for expert medical attention under an English Doctor, but succumbed to injuries on the 25th November 1856. Since his death happened at Puri, Captain Barkley's body could not be taken back to False Point to find him also a place near his beloved wife's grave.



Six years later, on the 24th May 1862, False Point Lighthouse lost its Superintendent Mr. Bernard and his Assistant Mr. Spooner and their death was by drowning. Mr. Bernard and his Assistant Mr. Spooner who were on a private visit to one of the vessels anchored on False Point Roads, met with the accident on their return journey to Port. While on their way back, in the Lighthouse rowing boat along with two Oarsmen, a squall caught on the boat and Mr. Spooner on steering could not control the boat and it capsized. All of them could cling to the bottom of the capsized boat, but rescue did not come, for no body from either the vessel they left or from the Port noticed this tragic incident. Well aware that they have to find their own way to safety before darkness spread over the sea, Mr. Bernard advised the others to take an oar each and swim towards the shore. As a real Captain in accidents, Mr. Bernard ordered the Oarsmen to leave first, followed by Mr. Spooner and last, himself. They swam towards Dowel's Island, the nearest shore and on reaching the shore, the Oarsmen realised that their Superintendent and his Assistant were missing.

The boat they travelled in was salvaged the next day, but the bodies of the Superintendent and his Assistant were never recovered. Mr. Bernard was living with his family at False Point and as an immediate relief to the family, the elder son of Mr. Bernard was appointed as Assistant Superintendent at False Point Lighthouse itself.

Mr. Thomas Geary, the brother in law of Captain Bernard who was working at Sauger Island Lighthouse as Telegraph Assistant then, was posted as Superintendent of False Point Lighthouse in 1865 and Mr. Geary had placed a marking stone in the Lighthouse cemetery in memory of his



brother in law and Mr. Spooner and the same can be seen at the cemetery even today.

The largest establishment

Since it's commissioning to till 1972, False Point Lighthouse had the credit of having the largest establishment in India, may be in the world. The main reason for keeping a big establishment was the remoteness of the station, maintaining of boats, non-availability of skilled workers in the vicinity and the large area of land available with the Lighthouse.

In the year 1875, the sanctioned establishment was;

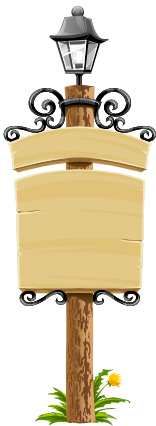
		Rupees	Annas
1.	Superintendent	200	0
2.	Asst. Superintendent	100	0
3.	Native Doctor	40	0
4.	Tindal	14	0
5.	Carpenter	15	0
6.	Carpenter mate	12	0
7.	Brazier	12	0
8.	4 Light watchers @ Rs.8	32	0
9.	Extra Light watchers during S.W. Monsoon @ Rs. 8	16	0
10.	2 Chaprasies @ Rs. 5	10	0
11.	Blacksmith	12	0
12.	Sweeper	4	0
13.	2 Manjees @ Rs. 8	16	0
14.	10 Dandies @ Rs. 6	60	0
15.	Washer man	6	0
16.	Barber	4	0
17.	2 Coolies @ Rs. 4	8	0
	Total	561	0

Several Inspecting officers criticised the extraordinary large establishment and in 1880 acting on the report of Lieutenant Stiffe, Port Officer of Calcutta, Government gave strict instructions to reduce the staff immediately and even suggested Port officer, False Point, to take over the duties of Superintendent of Lighthouse also.

This suggestion was turned down citing the difficulties in approaching the Lighthouse from the Port, for there was no road connection between the Port and Lighthouse and the boat travel was possible, only when the tides were favourable.

Succumbing to the pressure from the authorities, the Superintendent of Lighthouse agreed to cut the posts of Carpenter's mate, Brazier, two Chaprasees and a Barber and convert the post of Washer man from permanent establishment to temporary. Government agreed with this proposition and reduction of staff came into effect from 1st April 1880.

In the 1st half of 20th century, the skilled workers like Carpenter and Black smith were removed from the roll, Boat dandies reduced, and, Doctor, Health Assistant and School teacher were posted by the Orissa State Government. But still the establishment was large when compared to the other Lighthouses. The Attendance Register for the month of October 1960 shows the establishment as;



1.	Mr. M.R. Gupta	:	Head Lightkeeper
2.	Mr. Manik Gupta	:	Assistant Lightkeeper (senior scale)
3.	Mr. C.R. Chakravarthy	:	Assistant Lightkeeper (senior scale)
4.	Mr. P.G. Roy Choudury	:	Assistant Lightkeeper (junior scale)
5.	Mr. S.R. Gupta	:	Assistant Lightkeeper (junior scale)
6.	Mr. Shyam Mangalwalla	:	Driver
7.	Sudhama Majhi	:	Sarang
8.	K.C. Sing	:	Greaser
9.	Mr. Mayidher Roy	:	Watchman
10.	Mr. Sreedhar Das	:	Watchman
11.	Mr. Artha Mangalwallah	:	Watchman
12.	Mr. Anam Routh	:	Watchman
13.	Mr. Pitimber Raj	:	Watchman
14.	Mr. Krishna Mangalwallah	:	Watchman
15.	Mr. Narayan Sing	:	Boat Dandy
16.	Mr. Phagua Berra	:	Boat Dandy
17.	Mr. Eswara Das	:	Boat Dandy
18.	Mr. Thadia Mohanty	:	Boat Dandy
19.	Mr. Ratnakar Das	:	Gardener
20.	Mr. Bagwan Barrick	:	Dispensary Attendant
21.	Mr. Rama Gochiat	:	Sweeper
22.	Mr. B.S.Roy	:	Assistant Lightkeeper (senior scale)

Temporary establishment

23.	Dharani Shetty	:	Dhobi

There was a drastic cut in the establishment after the discontinuation of Radio beacon, surveying (writing off) of M.L. False Point and Jolly boat and arranging transport on contract.

At present False Point Lighthouse is working semi-automated with the support of Captive energy system and there is no staff permanently posted there. One Lightkeeper and an Attendant each are sent on rotation for 15 days tenure, from nearby Paradip Lighthouse.

Bengal tigers roaming around

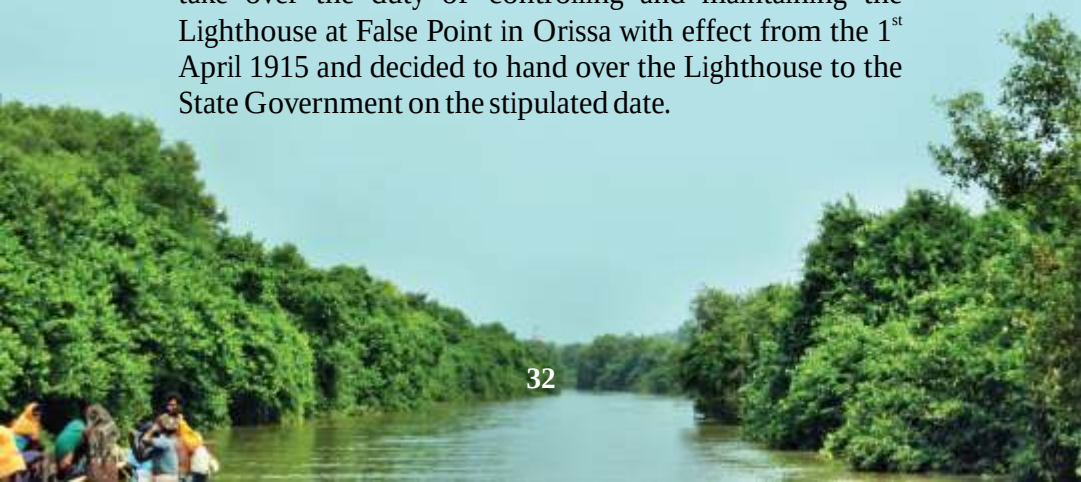
In the 19th century, the mangroves around False Point Lighthouse were connected with the world's largest mangroves Sundarban, famous for Bengal tigers, and the present tiger reserve, and the Nandankanan National Park of Orissa, famous for its white tigers. Even though there were no man eaters reported around the Lighthouse, sighting of those big cats in their living area made the staff jittery, and they approached the authorities for supply of firearms for their protection and moreover killing of wild animals was not an offence then and people took pride in killing them without reason.

A requisition for purchase of arms and ammunition for destruction of tigers in the neighborhoods of False Point Lighthouse was submitted to the Government in August 1879 and without any objection, 3 Snider Carbines were supplied in the next month itself.

There was heavy dwindling in the tiger population in the 19th and 20th centuries in India due to deforestation and uncontrolled poaching and same was the case in the number of arms supplied to Lighthouse. In 1942, there was only one .12 bore Leferer Hammerless ejector gun and the last one available at Lighthouse that was handed over to the nearby Ramnagar police station in 1986.

To Bihar and Orissa Government

Present States of Bihar and Orissa, conquered by the British in the 18th and 19th centuries, were part of the State of Bengal under the British India Government till 1912. When the Bengal state was split and Bihar and Orissa state were formed in 1912, Calcutta Port authorities under the Bengal State Government found difficulty in controlling False Point Lighthouse that became a part of the newly formed State, and in 1913 proposal was mooted to transfer the administrative control to Bihar and Orissa state administration. After discussion at several levels, the 1545th meeting of Calcutta Port Commissioners held on 25th August 1914, discussed the Government of Bihar and Orissa resolution No. 14712 Marine / VIL- 1 of 1914 dated the 6th August 1914, in which the Government had agreed to take over the duty of controlling and maintaining the Lighthouse at False Point in Orissa with effect from the 1st April 1915 and decided to hand over the Lighthouse to the State Government on the stipulated date.



The Lieutenant Governor of Bengal accepted the views of the Government of Bengal and Calcutta Port Commissioners regarding transfer of the Lighthouse to Bihar and Orissa State, and necessary orders were passed and the Commissioner of Orissa was advised to take over the station on the stipulated date.

Passing of Indian Lighthouse act

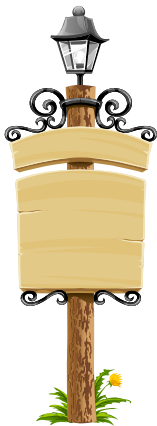
The Indian Lighthouse Act was passed in 1927 and powers for erecting and maintenance of all Coast Lights and collecting Light dues were vested in a central authority under the Government of British India. Accordingly Inspectorate General of Lighthouses (Present Directorate- General of Lighthouses and Lightships) was formed in 1929 and False Point Lighthouse was one of the first Lighthouses taken over by the new organization.

Improvements to Light

After taking over the lighthouse from the Orissa State Government, the Chief Inspector of Lighthouses also felt the inefficiency of the light and decided to improve the illuminant. In place of 6 wick Capillary lamp, 85mm Petroleum vapour lamp supplied by M/s Chance Brothers of Birmingham was introduced and revolving screens took the place of occulting screens. This new light was commissioned in March 1931.

During World wars

During the World wars, Cannons were provided at False Point for the protection of the Lighthouse. One of the old cannon barrels is available at the Lighthouse even today. Another Cannon barrel available at the Lighthouse was



taken away by the Superintendent of Museum, Bhuwaneshwar in 1972 for preservation.

Lighthouse land

As was the case with the large establishment, False Point Lighthouse had the largest land property under it. As per 19th century records, False Point had around 724 acres of land. However the beginning of 20th century witnessed widespread encroachment of the mangroves and converting it to paddy fields in the Costal Orissa. The area belonging to the Lighthouse was also not spared. Inspectorate of Lighthouses after taking over the False Point Lighthouse from the Orissa State Government decided to demarcate the land belonging to them. All that the Revenue authorities could trace without encroachment was around 150 acres of land.

Encroachment didn't stop there; after demarcation of land also, farmers continued encroaching land and converting it to paddy fields. In 1960 Directorate of Lighthouses and Lightships, Calcutta tried to retrieve the land from the encroachers, but it failed in the legal battle, for it did not have any documents to prove that the land belonged to the Lighthouse, except a drawing prepared in 1930. No formal documents were given by the Orissa

Government while handing over the Lighthouse to the Inspector of Lighthouses. At present 26 acre of land is under the possession of the Lighthouse.

Electrical Lights

False Point lighthouse was electrified in 1958 by installing new equipment supplied by M/s B.B.T. France consisting a 4th order revolving light with two panels placed at an angle of 135^0 apart to create a flashing character of twin flash in 20 seconds. The illuminant was an electrical incandescent lamp of 1000W and the rotation of optic was done by a clockwork mechanism with rewinding motors, and the electrical light was commissioned on 15th May 1958.

Lighthouse Optic

At present, the revolving optic installed in 1958 is still in service; but the illuminant is 400W Metal Halide lamp and rotation of optic is done with Electronic pulse motors.

Radio Beacon

Radio Beacon equipment supplied by M/s Marconi Wireless Telegraph Co. was installed by the end of 1958 and commissioned on Republic day in 1959. Since Public electric supply system was not available at False Point, four Diesel Gen-sets were installed to power Radio beacon and electrical light. The Radio beacon equipment was decommissioned in year 1991 as it was planned to shift it at Paradip which was logistically more convenient.

Lighthouse Boat Jetty

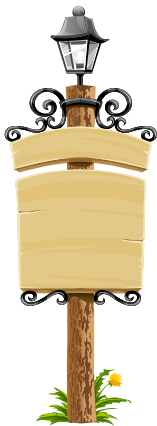
A telegraph machine was also supplied with the Radio Beacon but it was never installed. In 1991, when a major cyclone hit False Point, connection to the outside world was cut and sea water started entering the Lighthouse premises. The nearby villagers came to the Lighthouse for shelter and the telegraph equipment came handy to communicate. Then Head Lightkeeper Mr. M.G. Pillai, a retired Air force personal, connected the telegraph machine to the Radio Beacon transmitter and sent messages requesting for help. Some ships in the sea received this communication and informed the Calcutta Port authorities and help was sent through the Cuttack District Collector.

M.L. False Point

The main approach to False Point Lighthouse in 19th century was through sea. Stores and ration to the Lighthouse was sent through False Point Port. For the Inspecting Officers who were taking the sea route and for minor necessities, a rowing boat was sent to Kujang a nearby village. After closing down of False Point Port, authorities faced problems in supply of ration and stores to the Lighthouse. Since the Taldanda canal from Cuttack to False point was ready by then, they hired the boats of District Collector or Flood officer at Cuttack in emergencies.

To overcome the difficulties in hiring the boat from another department, the Government agreed to the proposal of Chief Inspector of Lighthouses and decided to provide a mechanised launch for the use of False Point Lighthouse.

M.L. False Point was built at Garden Reach



Workshops Ltd., Calcutta in the year 1957. The hull of this vessel was 47 feet long, 10 feet wide and 12 ½ feet high with a draught of 4 ½ feet and was of double skin construction using seasoned Burma teakwood with copper sheathing up to six inches above low water level. The propulsion was using a 'Perkins' made engine and Gen-set was of 'Kirloskar' make.

M.L. False Point was mainly used for the transportation of stores from Cuttack or for the travel of Inspecting officers. The repairs to the launch were a problem as the local workshops were not accepting the repairs due to non availability of spares. A major overhauling was done in 1972 at Garden Reach Workshop Calcutta, where it was built, but the problems remained and maintenance of it became a nuisance to the Lighthouse staff as well as to the Lighthouse Directorate. M.L. False Point was condemned in the year 1977.

Old Lights of Jolly boat

Jolly boat

A Jolly boat was made available at False Point Lighthouse since its commissioning. This boat was earlier used to visit ships on anchor and the nearest village for collection of vegetables etc. When a Post Office started functioning at Kujang to collect post, a regular Bi weekly trip on Tuesdays and Saturdays was charted.

A new Jolly boat, 20 feet long and 6 feet wide, capable of carrying 10-15 passengers and two quintals of load was supplied to the station on 21st April 1970 at a cost of ? 12847. A proposal for a jolly boat powered with an outboard engine was called off by the Department, as the bidder 'Orissa Boat Builders' were incapable to supply an outboard engine, unless they were provided with an import license for an outboard engine by the Lighthouse Department. Their suggestion for fixing an inboard engine of 8/10 H.P. was not acceptable to the Department.

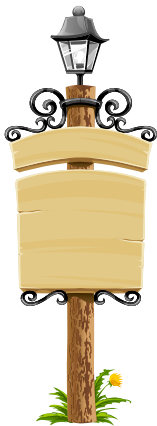
Departmental jolly boat was taken out of service and present system of wet leasing of mechanised boat started in 1988.

Concrete Staircase

Since white ants attacked the wooden staircase leading to the tower summit, the same was removed and concrete staircase was provided during 1961-62. During this period, several new staff quarters were also constructed to provide family accommodation to all staff members instead of Barrack accommodation.

Day Mark

To help mariners for identification of False Point tower in day light, a huge star was engraved on the body of tower while construction, facing sea. In the beginning of 20th century, the practice of painting the star with white colour started. Present colour pattern of horizontal red and white bands were given in 1966. Also as per the decision of 1965 to paint the lantern dome in Orange, False Point dome also was painted along with the tower.



A.K. Sen

A K Sen

Mr. Ajith Kumar Sen, a young chap from Calcutta city then, got his appointment order as Assistant Lightkeeper of False Point Lighthouse in September 1964. The instructions for him from the Calcutta Directorate of Lighthouses and Lightships that appointed him was, to take the train up to Cuttack, a bus from there to Kujang and the Lighthouse Boat would be available to take him to False Point.

On reaching Cuttack on 7th September 1964, Mr. Sen found the buses of Cuttack were nothing like the ones he was accustomed at Calcutta. The buses, half the size of the Calcutta ones, had three classes 1st, 2nd and 3rd classes in its short body. Since the condition of 3rd class at the back of the bus was horrible, and the purse of an unemployed, going for his first employment, was not hefty, he opted for the Second class.

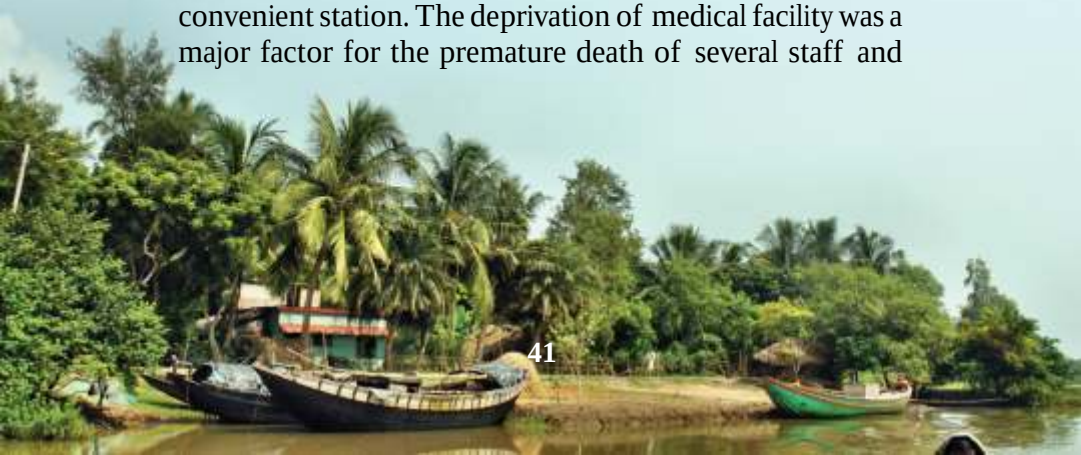
At Kujang, it was easy to find the boat jetty and the Lighthouse Jolly boat, but the journey was not a pleasant one. The well maintained boat with a large sized sail and rowers had to wait till late in the evening for setting of tide to start the journey. During the journey through mangroves in the darkness, Mr. Sen had to get down and walk through the mud several times, for there wasn't sufficient water for the boat to pass with its crew and passengers. Most of the time, the crew were towing the boat using a long rope, walking

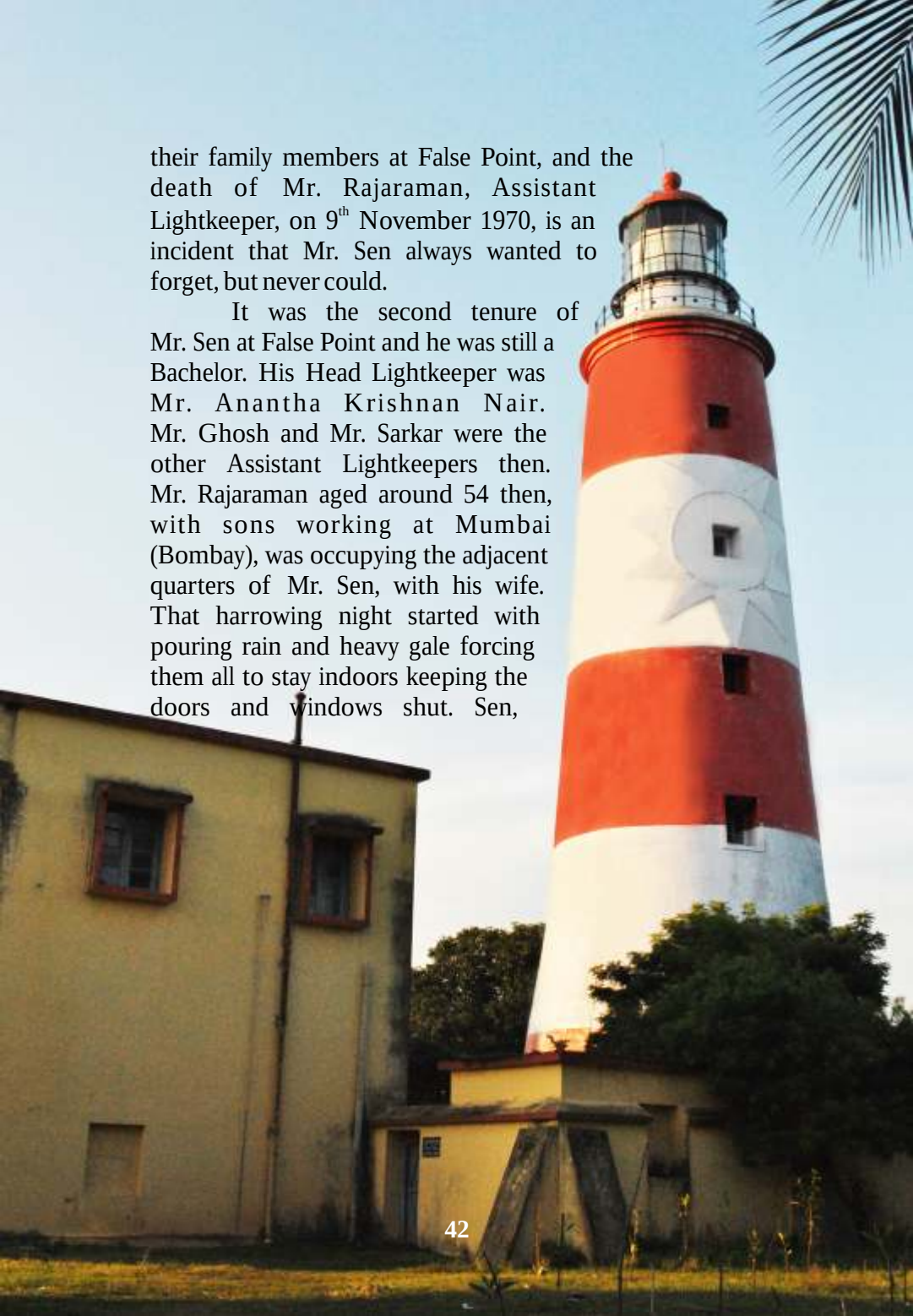
through the mud. The mangrove was full with fireflies and like a big firefly, the lighthouse flashed at a distance to bolster Mr. Sen, throughout his journey. The reverbative journey ended by midnight and he joined duty the very next day starting his long career as Lighthouse Keeper.

False Point Lighthouse stood isolated from the other habitats of that area but Mr. Sen never felt desolated for there were 25 staff members posted at that station and most of then lived with their family creating the atmosphere of a village. Since there was no common mess available then, he joined with the other two bachelor Lightkeepers, who were jointly cooking their food and all of them lived like a family.

Even though settlers at False Point had cleared most of the jungle and converted them to paddy fields by then, there were occasional sightings of Deers and Wild boars near the lighthouse and Sen remembers an incident of a Wild Boar attacking an Attendant, giving him fatal injuries.

Orissa State Government posted a Doctor and a Health Assistant at the Lighthouse, but the Doctor's service was seldom available there. Whenever posted to False Point, Doctors preferred either to resign from service or to proceed on long leave till they were transferred to another convenient station. The deprivation of medical facility was a major factor for the premature death of several staff and





their family members at False Point, and the death of Mr. Rajaraman, Assistant Lightkeeper, on 9th November 1970, is an incident that Mr. Sen always wanted to forget, but never could.

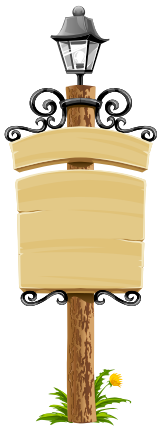
It was the second tenure of Mr. Sen at False Point and he was still a Bachelor. His Head Lightkeeper was Mr. Anantha Krishnan Nair. Mr. Ghosh and Mr. Sarkar were the other Assistant Lightkeepers then. Mr. Rajaraman aged around 54 then, with sons working at Mumbai (Bombay), was occupying the adjacent quarters of Mr. Sen, with his wife. That harrowing night started with pouring rain and heavy gale forcing them all to stay indoors keeping the doors and windows shut. Sen,

singing Bengali folk songs loudly to beat the off mood, heard the sharp knock on his door around 22.00 Hours.

At the door was Mrs. Rajaraman, bedraggled and shivering with fear or cold. Pointing towards the quarters they lived, she shouted something in her South-Indian dialect and ran back in the rain without pondering; and Sen ran after her presuming something was wrong with them.

Mr. Rajaraman was lying on his back on the cot without much sign of life and Sen who could feel death in that room, alarmed the Head Lightkeeper and all other staff immediately. The Doctor posted at the station was not available that day. The Head lightkeeper sent someone to summon the native doctor living in the nearby village. They did all the first-aids they could do and waited for the native doctor to come.

The native Doctor, who arrived an hour later, poured some medicines in Rajaram's mouth, with no result. He being a native Doctor, without any Government certification, was not ready to certify the death of Rajaraman and advised them to take him to Paradip, where the Port Doctor was available. Their Jolly boat that had gone to Kujang on a routine trip was stranded there for the last two days, unable to return due to cyclonic weather condition. Since no boatman would risk his life to cross the Mahanadi in that night and make a trip to Paradip, they were forced to wait till next morning. By early morning they felt Rigor mortis happening in the body of Rajaraman, but neither the Head lightkeeper nor his other assistants were daring enough to declare the death of Rajaraman to his wife, and ask her permission for cremation of the body as per the custom of Mr. Rajaraman. The poor lady, with her children away and herself living thousands of Kilometers away from

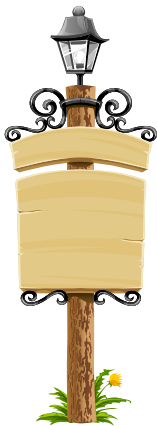


her hometown was also not valiant enough to disclose her feelings and opinion.

By 08-30Hrs. the next morning, they could hire a local boat. Challenging the adverse weather conditions, and risking their lives, they took the body of Mr. Rajaraman to Ganogolia, the nearest village on the other side of the Mahanadi River, where they expected the services of a Doctor to certify the death. Apart from Mrs. Rajaraman, Head Lightkeeper Mr. Anantha Krishnan Nair and Mr. Sen accompanied the body and it took four hours for the 12 miles journey and they reached Ganogolia by 12.30Hrs. Immediately they brought the Medical Officer of Paradip to the boat, but the Doctor was not ready to issue a Death certificate, pointing out that the death didn't happen in his jurisdiction. When Mr. Nair was running from pillar to post to get the death certified and to pass message to the sons of Rajaraman and the Directorate of Lighthouses, Sen was sitting with Mrs. Rajaraman inside the country boat, with the dead body.

When all the efforts to pass information to Rajaraman's sons went futile due to the failure of telephone and telegraph lines in the adverse weather condition, Mrs. Rajaraman suggested informing one of her cousins working at Cuttack, for she wanted one male member from the family to do the last rites as per their religious custom, or otherwise, she believed that the soul of her husband would never rest in peace. As the telegraphic line to Cuttack also was down, Mr. Nair took the help of some truck drivers to pass the message to Cuttack.

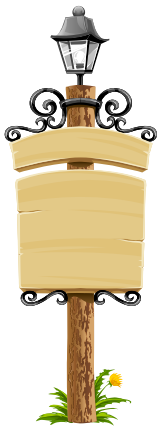
The arduous effort of Mr. Nair brought the Doctor



of Government Dispensary Kujang, at Ganogolia by 21-30 Hrs. and by the time the Doctor certified the death, and completed the Police formalities, it was 22-30Hrs. The cousin of Mrs. Rajaraman also reached by then. Since it was raining cats and dogs, a funeral was not possible that night and the non-availability of mortuary facility forced them all to spend that night in the Jolly boat at the jetty.

Since the body was showing symptoms of decomposing by 11th November morning, they cut log from the mangrove and arranged a pyre at Ganogolia itself. Since the log was new-cut and wet, plenty of kerosene was poured to boost the fire. The last rites of Rajaraman was done with the help of a Hindu priest arranged locally and after cremation Mrs. Rajaraman left with her cousin for Cuttack and Sen and the others returned to the station with doleful minds and drowsy eyes.

Mr. Sen, who retired as an Assistant Engineer from service, and is leading a peaceful retired life at Calcutta with his family, has good memories to share the reminiscences of his 6 years stay in three tenures at False Point Lighthouse.

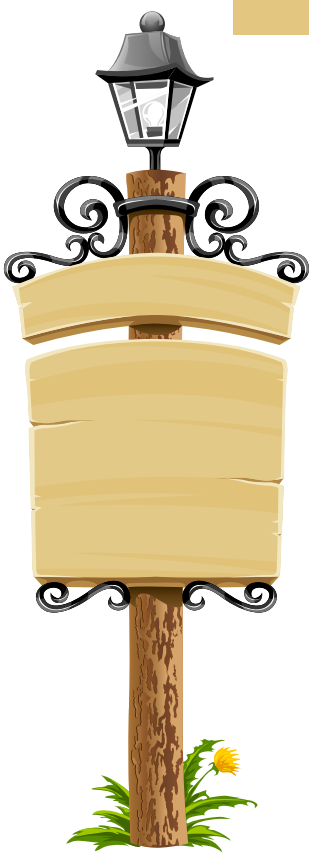


About the author

Sri. I C R Prasad joined the Directorate of Lighthouses and Lightships, Cochin as Assistant Lightkeeper on 3rd March 1980 and after serving in different lighthouses of East and West Coast India and Lakshadweep Islands, is presently working as Assistant Engineer (Electronics) at Azhikode DGPS and Lighthouse.

A man with great passion for Lighthouses, he has a good collection of Postage stamps, Coins, Photographs, Picture cards, Books, Periodicals, Replicas etc., etc. on lighthouses. He started his research on history of lighthouses, when Kadalur Point Lighthouse of his home district celebrated its centenary in 2009 and presently writing history of selected heritage Lighthouses.

Directorate-General of Lighthouses and Lightships supported his efforts to bring out the stories of the unsung heroes of the past who have designed and constructed lighthouses in difficult terrains and maintained them uninterrupted, to safeguard the mariners, by publishing his two books on Kadalur point and Mahabalipuram Lighthouses and this is the third book in the 'Historic Lighthouses' series.



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